

we could do right now is let taxpayers choose between paying a flat tax and the current system. You heard me right; they could simply, come tax day, choose whether to report their income and pay a flat tax on that income or to stay in the present system. We do not have to wait to 2001. That is the Washington way of studying things to death; it is called paralysis by analysis back here in Washington.

We could also and should also let taxpayers have the choice of investing a portion of their payroll taxes, their FICA contributions, into a directed IRA, an individual retirement account, so that they can earn a better return on their money than Social Security. To do that though we have to, as Mr. SMITH just has suggested here, we have to take the Social Security Trust Fund off budget once and for all. We have to let the trust fund stay in, the surplus rather, stay in the Social Security, let the surplus stay in the Social Security Trust Fund so that it will continue to accrue and compound interest.

We can do this. We can give workers a choice now again between a flat tax and the current system, between being able and having to put all their payroll taxes in Social Security or at least being able to put a portion in a directed IRA so that they can earn a better return than Social Security. The net effect is higher take-home pay, better retirement security and more freedom and opportunity for every American.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA).

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to represent the citizens of central Florida's 7th Congressional District. Our area and other central Florida communities were in the path of devastating tornadoes yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, while our residences, our businesses and our communities can and will be replaced, the lives of an unprecedented number of wonderful human beings has been lost forever. I would like to extend my heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends who have lost loved ones in this terrible natural disaster.

The people of my district are strong, determined, faith and family-oriented. They will rebuild, they will heal their wounds, but they will never forget that night or those lost.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to again see the wonderful people of my district in central Florida come together. I saw volunteers, law enforcement, emergency management personnel, utility workers, Red Cross representatives, private contractors, State and local and Federal officials and employees working together.

Mr. Speaker, I salute and pay tribute to the fine citizens of my State and district, and I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to my colleagues and others who have made expressions of concern and support during this difficult time.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 34 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 o'clock p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

We know, O gracious God, that in our lives and in our world we experience the contrasts of life. There are threats of war and promises of peace. There are moments of laughter and times of tears. There are seasons of love and occasions of disdain. There are instances of trust and others of suspicion. And yet, with all these feelings and attitudes, we have Your abiding word and Your reconciling peace.

As we walk through the uneven paths of our existence, may we rejoice and be glad that underneath are Your everlasting arms supporting us and making us whole. For these and all Your blessings, O God, we offer this prayer of thanksgiving. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. TRAFICANT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

SALUTING ILLINOIS BROADCASTERS AND BROADCASTERS ACROSS THE NATION

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, broadcasters across this Nation have a single mandate from the Federal Government, to serve the public interest in the communities where they operate. I am pleased that the Illinois broadcasters in my State do such an excellent job both on and off the air.

A recent survey conducted by the Illinois Broadcasters Association indicates that the average TV station in my State contributes over half a million dollars annually in air time for public service announcements and over 80,000 per radio station.

These stations are an integral part of small town USA and even create a sense of community in large cities. Local stations provide the news we depend on, the weather warnings we count on, and the public affairs programs which give viewers and listeners the opportunity to hear from their elected officials.

I salute the Illinois broadcasters in my district and the broadcasters across the Nation that do such a fine job day in and day out. America's system of free, over-the-air broadcasting has been on the job since the 1920s and still serves us well almost 80 years later. It is one thing we can all count on in the next millennium.

WE NEED ALLIED SUPPORT IN IRAQ

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, the American people are saying if military action is needed in Iraq, America should not do it alone, and the American people are right. The days of sending American soldiers overseas with a rifle on their shoulder and a credit card in their pocket just does not cut it anymore, Mr. Speaker, especially when many of our so-called allies sit on the sidelines and shout Yankee go home to boot.

Kofi Annan is to be commended for his efforts. It sounds good. But in any event, I think the wise words of Ronald Reagan apply here: Trust but verify; trust but verify.

But I will not, Mr. Speaker, support military action unless our allies are on the battlefield with us. We represent Uncle Sam; we do not represent Uncle Sucker.

PROTECTING SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. ROGAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, I was among hundreds of Republicans last month who stood and applauded President Clinton when he spoke in this Chamber I applauded because I thought he said that we should use any budget surplus to save "Social Security first." That is why so many of us vigorously applauded a position we thought he was taking. However, I have gone back and looked at his speech. What he actually said was we should "reserve" every penny of the surplus until we "save" Social Security.

What does that mean? We find out from the President's budget recently